Introduction

Though Christ Congregational Church was chartered in 2010, we have, since our founding, rejoiced to celebrate our connection to that “great cloud of witnesses” who have gone before us. That commitment is evident in many of the historical appointments of our “new” church. This brochure is provided as a guide to a better understanding and appreciation of some of those treasures.
The “Christopher Wren” Pulpit

Without a doubt, the most striking appointment of the Christ Church sanctuary is the raised baroque pulpit which graces the center of the Chancel area. The hexagonal, oak pulpit (shown here with Mr. Peter Goodchild, whom Christ Church commissioned to restore it in 2013) was designed by the builder of London’s St. Paul’s Cathedral, the famed architect, Sir Christopher Wren, to service another Wren-designed church, St. George’s Church, Botolph Lane, which opened its doors in 1676. That’s right, 1676!

The last service was held at St. George’s in 1890. The church was condemned in 1901 and demolished on May 21, 1904. The dispersal of the church contents was discussed at a meeting of the Court of St. James on September 26, 1901 in the presence of the king, with the church’s 17th century pulpit subsequently transferred to Christ Church-Fulham in that year. Christ Congregational Church acquired the pulpit in 2011 from a firm in London, England specializing in antique church furnishings.

Though Wren built at least 53 city churches in London after the great fire of 1666, only some 20 Wren pulpits survive in the world today. Of those, only one other Wren pulpit can be seen in the United States of America, at the Winston Churchill Museum in Fulton, Missouri.

According to notes by a modern British architect with a special interest in the works of Wren, the design of the pulpit which adorns our sanctuary, with carved swags and arched headed panels with cherub heads over, is similar to those of St. Augustine Watling Street (sadly, burnt in 1940 during the war) and St. Peter Cornhill (still standing in that church). Together, they constituted a splendid group of three—a “holy trinity” of Wren pulpits.

It is both humbling and inspiring to know that the Word of God is still being proclaimed in Lufkin, Texas from a pulpit built and put into use a full century before the founding of our country!
The "Staleybridge" Lectern

The brass, eagle lectern in the Chancel area was acquired by Christ Church from the same antique brokerage in England from which the “Christopher Wren Pulpit” was purchased. Exactly 200 years younger than the pulpit beside which it stands, the 19th century lectern was first put into use at the Holy Trinity Church of Staleybridge, England (a suburb of Manchester) in the year 1876 (the original dedicatory inscription can still be seen on the lectern’s base).

Featuring a beautiful barley rope design and patinated brass, the most outstanding feature of the lectern is the breath-taking eagle which serves as its unmistakable focal point. Since the time of the church father, Irenaeus (A.D. 140-202), the image of the eagle has been associated with the lofty, theological ideas of the Gospel of John, which begins with a paean of praise to the eternal, pre-existent “Word of God” Who became flesh in Jesus Christ.

Today, it is the prayer of Christ Church that the same Word of God might go forth to our world in power and glory, as on the wings of an eagle, on each occasion the Holy Scriptures are read from this magnificent lectern.
The “Clinton H. Meneely” Tower Bell

Though it cannot be seen, the sonorous, rich sound of the church bell which is housed in our entry tower can certainly be heard!

The “Meneely” bell is furnished to the glory of God through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. John Monk.

The 900-pound bronze bell was originally cast at the Clinton H. Meneely (pictured below in his Union Civil War uniform) Foundry at Troy, New York in 1882. It was fully and beautifully restored by the fine craftsmen at Brosamer’s Bells, Inc. of Brooklyn, Michigan, from whom Christ Church acquired it in 2015. It warms our hearts, and seems only fitting, to think that parishioners will be summoned to worship by the sound of a bell first put into the service of our Lord’s church in the same year that the city of Lufkin, Texas was founded!
The “Steinway” Piano

The fine piano which graces the Chancel of Christ Congregational Church was built in 1938 by Steinway & Sons of New York. Completely restored in the late 1980s by the piano master of the Houston Grand Opera and the Houston Symphony Orchestra, today, the refurbished instrument retains both its original soundboard—the soul of the piano—and real ivory keys.

But if one lifts the lid, one will discover what makes this instrument a priceless piece of musical history: its soundboard boasts the personal autograph of none other than Theodore Steinway, himself (pictured below)!

The “Steinway” piano is furnished to the glory of God, through the generosity of Mrs. Clydene Miles.